

## PREFIXES

Prefix is a word element located at the beginning of a word. They are used in medical terms to denote ***position, number and measurement, and direction***. Prefixes of position describe a ***place or location***. Prefixes of number and measurement describe an ***amount, size, or degree of involvement***. Prefixes of direction indicate a ***pathway or route***. Many other common prefixes may also be used to change the meaning of a word.

**1- *epi-*** = above, upon.

**Examples:** *epigastric* = pertaining to above the stomach

epicardium = above the heart

epicondyle = above the articular area

**2- *hypo-*** = under, below, deficient, low.

**Examples:** *hypodermic* = pertaining to under the skin

hypotension = low pressure

hypoglycemia = a condition of low glucose in the blood

hypoxia = a condition of low oxygen

hypochondrium = below the cartilages

hypoglossal = pertaining to under the tongue

**3- *hyper-*** = excessive, high, above normal.

**Examples:** *hypercalcemia* = excessive calcium in the blood

hypertension = excessive (high) pressure

hyperglycemia = a condition of excessive (high) glucose in the blood

**4- *infra-*** = under, below, basic.

**Examples:** *infracostal* = below the ribs

infraorbital = below the orbit

infrastructure = basic structures

**5- *bi-*** = two.

**Examples:** *bilateral* = pertaining to two sides

bicuspid = has two cusps

bilingual = speaks two languages

bidirectional = pertaining to two opposite directions

biannual = occurring twice (two times) a year

bifid = split or cleft into two parts

**6- *dipl-* and *diplo-*** = double.

**Examples:** *diplopia* = double vision

*diplobacterial* = bacteria linked together in pairs

**7- *hemi-*** = one half.

**Examples:** *hemiplegia* = paralysis of one half of the body

hemianopia = loss of vision in half the visual field

hemisphere = one half of a ball

**8- *sub-*** = under.

**Examples:** *subnasal* = under the nose

subclavian = under the clavicle

subgingival = under the gum

sublingual = under the tongue

submandibular = under the mandible

subcutaneous = under the skin

**9- *inter-*** = between or among.

**Examples:** *intercostal* = between the ribs

intercellular = among the cells

interdental = between the teeth

international = among the nations

interventricular = between the ventricles

internet = among the networks

**10- *intra-*** = inside or within

**Examples:** *intracellular* = inside the cell

intracranial = inside the skull

intravenous = inside the vein

intranet = within the network

**11- *pan-*** = all.

**Examples:** *pancytopenia* = a condition in which all blood cells are decreased.

pan American = all Americans.

pandemic = epidemic affecting all countries or continents in the world.

(Note: Epidemic is a disease that affects a large number of people within a community, population, or region. Endemic is a disease that affect a particular people or country).

**12- *post-*** = after, following, behind, back.

**Examples:** *postnatal* = pertaining to (the period) after birth

postmeridian (PM) = afternoon or after midday.

postprandial = after a meal, after dinner or after lunch.

postmortem = after death.

posterior = back in position.

post - dam = a posterior extension of a full denture.

postoperative = following a surgical operation.

**13- *pre-*** = before, in front of, first.

**Examples:** *prenatal* = pertaining to (the period) before birth.

preoperative = before a surgical operation.

premier = first in position, rank, or importance (premier league).

precentral = in front of the center.

prefix = before the root.

**14- *pro-*** = before, forward, outward for, advanced, early.

**Examples:** *prognosis* = knowing before.

protrusion = something bulges out or sticks out (protrudes).

prognathism = protrusion of the mandible.

prohormone = inactive precursor of a hormone.

prolapse = fall down or slip outward.

progeria = early aging.

**15- *retro-*** = backward, behind.

**Examples:** *retroversion* = turning backwards.

retromolar = behind the last molar.

retrognathism (or retrognathia) = further backward position of mandible.

retrograde = a backward or usual direction.

**16- *macro-*** = large.

**Examples:** *macrocyte* = large cell.

macrognathia = large mandible.

macroglossia = large tongue.

macrodontia = large tooth (or teeth).

**17- *micro-*** = small.

**Examples:** *microscope* = instrument for examining small (objects).

microdontia - very small tooth (or teeth).

microorganism = very small creature.

**18- *mono-*** = one.

**Examples:** *monosaccharide* = one sugar molecule.

mononuclear = has one nucleus.

monocracy (monocrat) = government by one person.

**19- *uni-*** = one, single.

**Examples:** *unipolar* = consists of one pole.

unicellular = consists of a single cell.

**20- *multi-*** = many, much.

**Examples:** *multigravida* = woman who has been pregnant more than once.

multilocular = having many locations (or places).

**21- *poly-*** = many, much, excessive.

**Examples:** *polyuria* = many urinations (much urine production).

polyphagia = excessive eating or appetite.

polydipsia = excessive thirst or excess drinking.

**22- *primi-*** = first.

**Examples:** *primigravida* = woman during her first pregnancy.

primary = the first.

**23- *quadri-*** = four.

**Examples:** *quadriplegia* = paralysis of four limbs.

quadrilateral = has four straight sides.

**24- *tri-*** = three.

**Examples:** *triceps* = three heads.

trilaminar = consists of three layers.

**Exercise:** Identify the prefixes in (and define) the following terms:

epidemic, epinephrine, hyponatremia, hyperkalemia, hypercholesterolemia, hypotonia, infratemporal, infrahyoid, bigamous, bicentennial, bicycle, binuclear, hemifacial, hemihepatectomy, subdural, subcortical, intercontinental, intrauterine, intraoral,